

Happiness in Our Life or Our Happiness in Life

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Do the two halves of the given title above mean the same to you or do they mean two different things? The first seems to imply that such a thing we call happiness, by itself, seems to exist in our life. It seems a reality, it seems to be inherent with us to a lesser or greater degree. Whether we discover it adequately or not turns out to be our own triumph or our own failing. On the other hand, do we really create something new, a product of our own manipulation, a product or situation which did not hitherto exist on its own right? We shall probe into these as we go on.

Let us first take the concept of happiness. Life of man in the world, by the very nature of its structure, does not seem to yield anything very much that may seriously be called happiness. It appears to be that it is the human mind, the most treasured of the components that go to make the human, that frames happiness within a specific perimeter. And the structure of that human mind seems to be a variable according to time, place and person. Has it a fixed identity, derived or fixed upon it from outside? Let us simply ask ourselves the question Do we think or are we made think?

The question looks so simple. So we never ask ourselves. Thinking goes on all the time. Therefore we never stop to ask the why and the wherefore of it. The agent of the machinery behind what we call thinking is extremely subtle and evasive. So we never stop to think of its identity. On the other hand, the process of thinking is continuously creative and immensely productive in its output. Thoughts or this bulk of our thinking process, without any awareness of its origin on our part, without any sensitivity to its propriety or correctness, keeps pushing us into activity, i.e. our day-to-day living process.

Cultural traditions generated by men, women and children throughout the

growth of the human community in far distant places, at times enriched by religious considerations, have created special sources of happiness as in the case of Songkran of Thailand and Malaysia on the advent of the solar New Year and Hanamatsu of Japan in commemoration of the birth of the Buddha in our eastern world. These are instances more of collective happiness. The happiness they provide lie in the collective participation of a set of people with common interests.

From what we have said so far, it appears that happiness does not exist in the world outside, on its own, by itself. Happiness is a state of response of the human mind to a set of circumstances either within oneself or in the world outside. Primarily there is a degree of agreeability, that things must fall alongside our expectations, they must satisfy our innate wishes. With the inextricable relationship of mind and body that the Buddhists accept, their concept of happiness therefore both regions of body and mind, both physical and mental. One is called the sense of ease and comfort of the body [*kāyikam sukhaṃ*] and the other the joy of mind [*mānasikam somanassaṃ*].